

LD 4616

5

A 6 V 4

1851



Class LD 4616

Book A6V4⁵

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

AMERICAN WHIG AND PHILOSOPHIC SOCIETIES

OF THE

COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY.

JUNE 24th, 1851.

BY THE

HON. ABRAHAM W. VENABLE.

Princeton, N. J.:

PRINTED BY J. T. ROBINSON.

1851.



ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

AMERICAN WHIG AND PHILOSOPHIC SOCIETIES.

OF THE

COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY.

JUNE 24th, 1851.

BY THE

HON. ABRAHAM W. VENABLE.

Princeton, N. J.:

PRINTED BY J. T. ROBINSON.

1851.

LD 4616

.5

.A6 V4

In Exchange
Peabody Inst. of Balto.
June 14 1927

Extract from the Minutes of the Cliosophic Society, June 24th, 1851.

Resolved, that a committee of three be appointed to tender the thanks of the Society to the Hon. A. W. VENABLE, for his able and appropriate address delivered before the American Whig and Cliosophic Societies on yesterday; and to request a copy of the same for publication.

A. McDONALD,	} Committee.
J. T. DUFFIELD,	
H. G. HALL,	

From the Minutes of the American Whig Society, June 25th, 1851.

That the thanks of this Society be respectfully tendered to the Hon. A. W. VENABLE, for his eloquent address, and that a Committee be appointed to request a copy of the same for publication.

R. S. McCULLOH,	} Committee.
F. L. R. KING,	
J. T. JONES.	

23200

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE AMERICAN WHIG AND PHILOSOPHIC SOCIETIES :

THE claims of the world upon the citizen-scholar, the educated man, is my subject. The occasion, as well as the audience, renders it peculiarly appropriate. This is no mere gala-day ; neither should it be an empty and formal celebration of an anniversary, a simple demonstration of respect for a time-honored usage. It should be an occasion for the renewal of our obligations to be useful to our generation, an accumulation of our offerings to the passing age, as well as to posterity. Their claims are founded in justice ; to acknowledge them is duty, to repudiate them is criminal. "No man liveth to himself." None can divest themselves of the relations arising out of their social constitution ; neither can any of us withhold our efforts to increase the stores of knowledge, or to advance the enterprise of civilization, without incurring the censure of the living and dishonoring the memory of the dead. If we consider the peculiar constitution, intellectual, moral and physical, which

man received from his great Creator, it would be nothing less than the perversion of gifts, and the neglect of duty. The principle of individuality prepares him for self-preservation, and endows him with all the impulses which concentrate his energies and call forth his efforts to secure his comfort and his safety. He was also supplied with those sensibilities which unite him with his race, which induce him to seek associations with them, from which the highest and most exquisite enjoyments of which he is susceptible are derived, and to which all the enduring improvements, as well as the embellishments of human character, must be referred. This is the social principle, a combination of intellectual power, moral feeling and physical instinct. In these two principles originate all that is valuable and ornamental, as well as all that is odious and depraved, in the character of man. Individuality in excess is cold selfishness, a turning in upon the heart of all the fountains of social feeling, until the sensibilities perish in the stagnant pool, from which no healthful and refreshing streams flow out. The social feeling in excess is reckless prodigality, the neglect of individual duty, and the unwise and wasteful expenditure of the elements of high civilization. Individuality, modified by the social principle, promotes industry, concentrates power and accumulates wealth; thus combining all the influences indispensable to the fullest development of human capacity, as well as the highest attainments of human happiness. It suggests, as well as secures

safety to the persons and property which constitute social organization. These principles, by mutual reaction, restrain the excesses of the one, and modify the sternness of the other; a process, by which the vices, that deform the character and disturb the peace of society, are divested of their odious aspect, and stand forth, in bold relief, acknowledged virtues, the sources of general comfort and prosperity. Thus, by the conditions of our creation, we are made members of the great family of men, and whilst all others are under obligations to promote our good, we are equally bound to them for the performance of a similar duty. We admire the harmonious action of these apparently opposing principles, in the organization of communities, resulting in the greatest good, as we look with wonder at the varied rays of the rainbow, by a law of their nature "softly blending every color into one."

But whilst admiring, let us ask what is our personal interest in this subject? In what way are the responsibilities of our situation to be met, and the legitimate claims of our fellow men upon us to be discharged? These are grave inquiries and imply serious duties. It becomes us honestly to seek for the truth and, having found it, to obey its directions.

The first duty of the citizen-scholar, is to add to the stores of knowledge, to avail himself of all that has been accumulated, to combine the discoveries of the past with the improvements of the present, to concentrate the rays of intellectual light for the

illustration of truth, and to remit to posterity a legacy of practical wisdom: to add to the empire of Science, which is knowledge founded on demonstration and reduced to certainty: to encourage and cherish the efforts of Art, the great agent in all human progress, the production of human ingenuity, as contradistinguished from natural causes, the exhibition of the inventive faculty, a combination of mental skill, and physical power. All of the present, and much of the past is our own. Memory, the consciousness of that which has gone, like a picture gallery, places before us the experience and wisdom of our predecessors, as well as their folly and their crimes. It arrays facts unconnected with associations and prejudices, which too often mislead. The light of reason discovers the truth, and the judgment guides the mind to proper conclusions. With the duties of the present, and the learning of the past, the educated man cannot be indifferent to his obligations to posterity without justly incurring censure. The waste of mental culture in useless investigations, or in defence of error, or the sordid avarice which would turn in upon the individual mind, the riches acquired by industrious application, are infinitely more criminal in the intellectual than in the social world. The money of the spendthrift, after passing from his possession, performs its proper functions in the hands of succeeding owners; the hoards of the miser, wrested from his grasp by the hand of death, are distributed to others who use them: whilst the

ingenious, and it may be able defence of error, or the literary trifling, which, to say the least, is mental dissipation, like counterfeit coin is worthless in itself, and mischievous in its circulation; and death overtakes the literary miser with a menstruum that dissolves all his jewels, and pours them into his grave, as lifeless as his sensibilities, and as cold as his heart: a practical demonstration of the mischievous and the useless; a blot and a blank upon the page of history. The high duty of the scholar is industriously to elaborate truth. He should collect and preserve the scattered gems which he finds in his path. He should cultivate the flowers of nature, as assiduously as he accumulates its treasures. The certainties of Science, he should deliver over to her handmaiden, Art, to aid in those combinations, which both increase the power, and add incalculably to the comfort and happiness of man. His aim should be Truth, lovely for its own sake, too sacred to be trifled with, the only source of improvement, the foundation of all that is valuable. No toleration should be given to error, for error never can be harmless. It is cumulative in its nature, and although it may not entirely disarm, uniformly diminishes the force of truth. The attainments of the age are referable to the refutation of a few errors in Chemistry and other branches of physical science, which taken alone, would not seem capable of arresting the progress of philosophical research. But they stood in the way, like the pebble which dried up the stream, by obstructing and pre-

venting its flow from the fountain. Art was left to work alone, with a few facts ascertained by observation; for Science, groping in error, could not come to her aid with the laws, which by their operation produced those facts. The field of enterprise was narrowed down into a few incidents, instead of great general laws. Error stood in the gate with a drawn sword, and excluded all who desired to enter, until overcome and displaced by the power of Truth. The great practical utilitarianism of the present age is the result of the successful efforts of the friends of Truth, to displace and explode errors which in former times degraded physical science into alchemy, astrology and necromancy.

The power of truth is also cumulative. Its conquests are permanent, its triumphs enduring. Error distorts the mental vision, contracts the horizon of observation, and finally sinks into absolute darkness. Truth rises with the light, enlarges its horizon with its development, and with an eye which perceives more clearly, as the brightness is more intense, apprehends and appropriates all within the scope of its perception. It is from this cause that we find ourselves surrounded by such remarkable circumstances. The first developments of scientific truth, like steps cut in a mountain of adamant, were the fruits of intense and unassisted labor; each law of physical Science was a detached principle, which had attracted the inquirer; like the casual ray of light, reflected from the diamond and falling upon the eye of one

accidentally passing across its direction, it caused him to pause, to catch the ray again, and to follow its guidance to the jewel. The diamond was found, before the geological laws regulating its location were determined; the locality disclosed those laws, and conducted future researches to successful results. Each law of science discovered, carved out another step on the mountain's adamantine face, leaving it easy of access to those who came after. Each step enlarged the horizon, and gave new subjects of observation, a place to stand upon and cut still another step. Step after step has been hewn out; one after another has ascended to renew observations, and continue the work, until objects which, some time since, seemed scarcely perceptible by the telescope, are brought to actual inspection. He, who was once only familiar with the valley, now ascends the mountain side, to survey the rich and varied scene which spreads out before his view. The art of printing, and the generosity peculiar to intellectual and scientific attainments, forbid and prevent the obliteration of what has been achieved. In geometrical progression, the discoveries of science are combined, manipulated, and applied by art; until it is almost as unphilosophical to be incredulous, as it used to be esteemed unwise to believe. With a rapidity unequalled, discoveries burst upon us, scarcely announced before realized by experiments, until we have ceased to express astonishment at suggestions, which a few years since would have scarcely caused an inquiry, or perhaps excited a smile.

The horizon of observation is extending. Truth rises on an untiring wing. Free views of the dignity of human nature are adopted, and the claims of the world upon the citizen-scholar, the educated man, promise to be realized.

This is an obligation, which attaches to you, as members of the great literary commonwealth. The world requires a return for the privileges enjoyed by you ; it will be your honor to acknowledge the claim, and satisfy the demand.

Let no one suppose that he can escape the responsibility, by concluding that he is not called to the high investigations of Philosophy, that an humble and more secluded walk in life is for him. Admit this to be so, it should be remembered, that the accumulation of the learning of the world, like its wealth, is from minute beginnings. All truth is valuable, and every occupation in life may lead to its development. The grains of gold washed from the sand, are as pure and as precious, as any equal amount found in massive pieces in the earth. The laws of nature, the benevolence of the Creator, shine out as brightly in the blade of grass, as in the most stately tree ; in the opening of the smallest bud, as in perfection of the richest flower ; in the economy of the minutest insect, or smallest reptile, as in that of the eagle or the elephant ; in the dew-drop as in the shower ; in the trickling rill, as in the majestic river. The operations of the laws of nature are uniform ; whether they relate to things small or great ; the

inquirer may detect them as readily in the one as in the other ; and the most important contributions to scientific truth, the richest gifts to art, have been received from those whose minds have been led to discoveries, by observations made whilst engaged in the ordinary pursuits of life. These are unostentatious, but inestimable gifts into the treasury, like the widow's mite, given freely and from the highest motives. Should you do all in your power for the increase of knowledge, you will have discharged your duty ; less than this should not be your aim.

But whilst it is incumbent on you to make positive additions to the amount of knowledge, you are equally bound to expose error, and aid in the formation of sound public opinion. What are called popular errors have always been the most serious obstacles to the progress of discovery, and the increase of knowledge. Proverbs, dogmas, and certain pithy sayings, have often paralyzed the energies of the inquirer ; and, when uttered by those who add age and experience to ignorance and folly, they produce most mischievous results. They prevent the progress of discovery, by limiting the field of research. Vain and conceited men, as well as some who are better disposed, have always been the foremost in this kind of opposition to truth. Possessing some knowledge, and but little wisdom, they have not learned the important lesson, that he who relies exclusively upon his own learning or experience, can never make extensive acquirement. Human life is so short, and the means of observation

with any individual are so limited, that a great deal cannot be usually effected by such isolated and unassisted efforts. It is our duty, as well as our privilege, to take possession of the literary and philosophical wealth of our predecessors; to examine the titles by which it is held, and to ascertain the real value at which it should be estimated; to assay the coin, which has descended to us by inheritance; to purify it from alloy, and to discard all that is spurious. Nothing should be rejected because it is old; or regarded with suspicion, because it is new. A mere reverence for antiquity should not induce us to underrate that which modern researches has added to the resources of science and of art. It is no disparagement to the acuteness or the learning of Aristotle or Archimedes, that Bacon, Newton, Watt and Fulton, have accomplished much that they left undone. It would be strange, if we should close our eyes upon the wonders disclosed by Morse in the electric telegraph, because Franklin was ignorant of this undiscovered secret. This would be as unwise in the scholar, as it would be unpatriotic in us, who enjoy the ease, luxury and refinements of the present day, to forget our hardy ancestors; who, by a successful conflict with the savage, the forest and the elements, subdued a wilderness, and gave it to us for a home. The traveller would not refuse to be refreshed by water from a solitary well, in the desert, if ignorant of the motives which induced those who dug it to select that particular location. Neither

would he denounce the enterprise of preparing others in the vicinity, because preceding generations had neglected to do so. The scholar should thankfully receive all of truth, and all of the useful, which has been discovered or effected by those who have gone before him, and seek to avoid their errors, in the appropriation of their work to the interests of the age in which he lives. It would appear strange that such a suggestion should be needed, but we are often admonished of the propriety of watchfulness against the effect of popular errors on the mind. The most brilliant discoveries of modern times were seen, in the distance, centuries ago; and the principles upon which they depend were strongly indicated; but the shackles of false philosophy trammelled the inquirer, and often sheer mental timidity prevented their development. The suggestions, however, of master minds, left indications on record; and these have been pursued to consummations which they merely supposed to be possible. The startling discoveries of Galileo operated alike upon some, who, supposing themselves in possession of all real knowledge, regarded him as an innovator and intruder, and on many others, who apprehending injury to the cause of revealed religion, deemed him an infidel. Thus wicked and designing men originated, and the ignorant, but well disposed, adopted and gave influence to an error, which has been in all time most mischievous in its effects on the popular mind, namely: "*That freedom of inquiry may result in injury to Truth.*" Men are taught to

worship the temple instead of him, who sanctifies the temple. They act as if their veneration gave dignity to Truth, forgetting that truth confers dignity on all who venerate it. Truth invites, never avoids investigations. The rocky shore does not retire from the approaching wave, but meets its stroke, and retains its position. The tide washes the face of the mountain, and retires ; the storm may force it higher upon its side, but can neither remove nor destroy it, for it rests upon the foundation of the very basin in which the ocean floats. Truth is always developed by the most searching scrutiny. No one truth can be opposed to another ; composed of simple elements, it must be consistent with itself, and wherever there is an apparent conflict, it is because error has intruded itself into the array, and so presented facts, that they have been referred to causes which have not produced them. Principles are nothing but great facts, the materials with which reason operates to illustrate Truth. The relations of these facts to each other, and their operation when brought into combination, the results which are produced, and the certainties which are attained, all taken together constitute Philosophy, scientific knowledge, the ascertained laws of nature. These subjects of demonstrative certainty include much, but not all of the vast field before us for investigation. New facts are continually discovered, but their relations to other facts are not certainly ascertained. Being still subjects of speculation, they add to the amount of knowledge, and are preparing

the way for further advancements of science. They furnish a first meridian, from which calculations may safely commence, and in the present state of civilization can never be lost to mankind. Science and art hold their titles by more enduring evidences than the perishable devices by which men seek to perpetuate their claims to estates. Revolution, corruption, fraud, or the brute force of conquest, overthrow and destroy the one, whilst the claims of the other are inscribed on the marble and the granite, on the Temple and the Pyramid. The march of invaders, or the extermination of the possessors, transfers the title of property, and the dominion of the soil; but the achievements of intellect and genius, have survived the inroads of barbarism, the fury of bigotry, the invasion of the sands of the desert, as well as the silent decay of time. The butcher, whose name would pollute the page of history, but for a popular error which overrates military renown and underrates all that is truly valuable to man, has cursed and scourged his generation, and sunk into forgetfulness; his wealth and his honors live only in tradition; while there is scarcely a comfort, a luxury, or an application of the principles of science to the practical purposes of civilized life, which is not due chiefly to the unobtrusive and often unknown scholar. His name may be forgotten, but his work remains. The benefactor of his race leaving the impression of his mind upon the generations who succeed him, has achieved the highest purpose of the good and the great; he has done good,

he has added to the stock of knowledge and happiness; and curtailed instead of increasing the sorrows of his race. Such are the claims of scientific practical truth. Such are the evidences that it avoids no scrutiny, shrinks from no investigation; enduring in its nature, it is unmoved, although subjected to constant assaults; progressive in its operations, although beset by enemies; sure of its conquests, because they are self-protecting. Evidences which shall remain until time shall destroy the monuments of the past, and the present, until civilization shall change its direction, and turn towards barbarism.

We need not, therefore, be concerned lest the discoveries of science should unsettle or destroy anything that is true. There is no ground for the fears which have recently seized many good men, lest the speculations of ethnologists, or the lucubrations of antiquarian travellers, should render doubtful the revealed, the inspired history of the human race. If the Bible cannot withstand such scrutiny, it is unworthy of our faith. Purporting to be but the history of the creation, the fall, and the redemption of man, it is a system neither of philosophy nor of astronomy. It records facts, with the brevity, simplicity and dignity of Truth, and all the facts necessary for a perfect illustration of the purpose for which it was written. All on either side of this, is left for human intellect to examine and unfold; to bring the result to the landmarks which inspiration has established, as a test of the truth or falsehood of its conclusions. De-

tached facts of doubtful dates, and of unknown connection with other facts, may at first seem inconsistent with each other, but when the hiatus is filled, all is consistent, all is explained. No man who properly reverences revealed truth can fear the effect of disquisitions upon the unity of the human race, or tremble for the consequences to scripture history, or scripture chronology, from the revelations made by antiquaries, whose witnesses are mummies rolled in pitchy garments, and whose records are obscure hieroglyphics faintly traced on the bark of trees. It is desirable that these investigations should be made without reference to Bible history. In the end, the whole truth will but confirm it, and afford that support which the testimony of unwilling witnesses always gives. True science shines with reflected light, and its lustre is bright but mild, intense, but not painful. The rays which illuminate, are from the sources of truth; and it often bows in adoration, to catch more and brighter beams; it comes with all its conquests, and places its honors where they alone are due, owning that name at which every knee must bow. Infidel science mingles with the light, that which comes from sparks "of its own kindling;" it has long maintained a controversy with revealed truth; materialism and rationalism, its two phases, as old as the first transgression, have, through all ages given complexion to the history of man. The one gross, the other more refined, each in its turn has been antagonistic to the self-denying, chastening system, taught by revelation.

In all their mutations, it is easy to perceive the fundamental error of each; conscience announces human responsibility to our Creator, and experience denies the perfectibility of human nature. As distinct systems, each has been a formidable foe to the progress of truth. When exposed, the peculiarities of each have been combined, and the elements being irreconcilable, are self-destroying; a hybrid is produced, incapable of continuing its race.

There is then nothing to be feared from learning, knowledge, science,—No! in the conflict between truth and infidelity, the victory must be with Truth. In whatever form the assailant may come, his dying exclamation will but re-echo that of the royal apostate, “Thou hast conquered, O Galilean.”

I have been led to these remarks by some striking developments, which are now in progress. There is a peculiar character manifested in the literature, as well as the philosophy, of the present time, which is worthy of particular consideration. Errors have, in a great measure, controlled the popular mind; and we are perceiving the consequences in the state of public opinion. The light and frivolous productions, which teem from the press, costing but little thought in their creation, and requiring as little in their perusal, have debauched the public taste, and created a morbid appetite for mere reading. It is erroneously supposed, that mental discipline and proper education are to be attained by the quantity which is read, the mass of current literature which is consumed. Intel-

lectual indigestion and mental dissipation are the consequence; the idea has usurped the place of the substantial, and the stern realities of life are regarded as either too common-place to attract interest, or unworthy of the attention of refined and cultivated minds. Much of the philosophy of the times has partaken of the same character; the two classes of writers catering to the same corrupted taste. A kind of transcendental theorising, a sentimental rationalism, has filled the world with associations and sects, whose vagaries are well calculated to excite apprehensions with all who desire the permanence of our institutions, or the best interests of mankind. This evil originated in improper views of education, and the manner in which it should be conducted. Those educated according to such erroneous doctrines, extend the mischief incalculably by their influence, because in their turn they become instructors of others. Here, as in other instances, mere learning has been mistaken for science, the accumulation of ideas for education. Minds, trained to the consideration of detached truths, without reference to their connection with, or dependence upon, other truths, have been infected with monomania; and the whole host of *isms*, which have been sprung upon us, manifest the extent as well as the character of the evil. A hasty perusal of the various schemes for education, would satisfy any judicious thinker of the truth of their suggestions. It is assumed, and granted, that education is desirable, but it should be proper education. Correct mental

discipline, instruction not as to words but as to things. Words should be regarded only as the signs of things. Facts and principles ought to be impressed upon the memory, the storehouse from which reason draws its choicest treasures. I would not be understood to approve of a system of education which seeks to make a community of philosophers, a nation of *savans*; neither have I adopted that educational fanaticism, which is restless, unless every mind in the country is cultivated to its full capacity of acquiring knowledge. For this literary Fourierism, I have no greater toleration, than for the same system applied to society. Whilst every good man ought to endeavor to place the means of elementary instruction, within the reach of the youth of the country, I utterly dissent from the propriety of making instruction an eleemosynary institution. I cannot approve of a policy which authorises a state to superintend and control the education of youth, nor do I perceive the wisdom of making them scholars by statute, or philosophers by act of Assembly.

Janissaries, whether military or literary, add nothing to the safety of the rights of the people; in any crisis they would lean to the power that fed them. Education is a high privilege; knowledge is power, and like every other advantage in social life, it ought to require virtuous efforts to enjoy the one, or to wield the other. The necessities of human life are indispensable to the perfection of human character, and we are so constituted, that those things which cost nothing, are

usually estimated accordingly. It will add nothing to the valuable organization of society, to place the formation of public morals or public opinion in the control of the government. According to the theory, as well as the practice, of our institutions, power is the prize in a party struggle. Those who obtain it, seek to perpetuate its possession, by influences upon the popular mind. The government which directs the details of education will always be sufficiently sagacious, to secure those who hold their opinions as directors of the instruction of youth. Those agents select teachers, who indoctrinate pupils, imbue their minds with the fanaticism and monomania which prevail with themselves; inspire them with the belief, that progress in a given direction, is the only way to the perfection of human character, and the advancement of human right; and thus surround *the powers that be* with a force so potent for evil, that the general safety forbids its existence. It is no more a primary duty of government to educate its citizens in literature and philosophy, than to furnish them labor, to instruct them in mechanical trades, or to give direction to individual industry. The exercise of either power is tyrannical, because it operates unequally. The former is the most mischievous because it places a more efficient engine in the hands of the government. The Jesuit has never asked for more than the schools of a country, to dictate the religion and the government of the people. The Fourierite, the Mormon, and the Socialist, will do the same; and

there is no counteracting agency, beside the practical good sense of individuals; who, rightly appreciating its value, are willing to pay the price of sound education acquired under their observation and control. This they may successfully do, unless the civil power monopolizes all the resources of instruction, and thus effectually destroys conservative competition.

The simple elements of education are within the reach of most virtuous and industrious persons, and those inclined to encounter the labor of thorough, mental cultivation, will usually accomplish for themselves all that is necessary. Superficial attainments are by no means valuable, as to their effect on either social relations or individual happiness. *It is true* that "a little learning is a dangerous thing;" it gives an impulsive, as well as unsteady action, to the public mind; and, like the stimulant which excites nervous sensibility, without a permanent increase of muscular power, is productive of no salutary result. In the mental twilight, subjects are perceived out of their fair proportions, principles are mistaken or misapplied, and the skilful and designing are enabled to concentrate a most dangerous force. Men are taught to reason in the circumference, and not from the centre. They may accidentally take a right position, but it is lost as soon as attained. It is no answer to this objection, that the evil will be removed by thoroughly educating the whole community. This necessarily implies the propriety of legislative coercion. The thing is impossible, and not desirable if it were

attainable. The physical and moral condition of men is the same, despite of science, learning, art, manufactures, commerce and improvements, or even forms of government. Those superior in natural powers, or physical endowments, always have controlled, and always must control, the less favored in those qualifications. This is a law of matter, as well as of mind. Nothing can be so constructed, but that it must have a bottom and a top. There must be something to be moved, as well as a motive power. Intellectual superiority operates on the minds of men, just as physical force impels the motions of matter. Nor does this exclude the idea of liberty and equality. For liberty is the equality of rights, not of condition; condition is the result of progress, and is an artificial element, developed by social relations. The wants, as well as the adaptation of the faculties of men to various pursuits, render a correspondent variety of training indispensable; and the whole error concerning the peculiar dignity of scientific and purely intellectual pursuits arises from underrating other employments. An aristocracy is created upon a mere speculative assumption of superiority, and men are taught to look to the acquisition of knowledge by the process of literary education, as an end, and not as a means. Mechanical and agricultural labor are underrated, and persons engaged in certain professions, esteemed honorable or literary, are placed greatly in advance of those, who are more usefully employed, whether we estimate the effect of their labor on indi-

vidual comfort, or national wealth. It is a mistake that the scholar in his study, the statesman in his avocation, the professional man in his employment, the author at his pen, or the officer in military command, are either more useful, more honorable, or fulfilling a higher calling, than those whose mechanical skill, or agricultural enterprise, are giving the chief impulse to the work of human civilization. The pressure and universality of human wants demand that such a portion of labor should be constantly employed for their relief, as to render it impossible for the general application of so much time, as is requisite for high scientific attainments, or literary acquisition with the masses. He is a patriot, and a well disciplined man, who effects the greatest good to his generation by virtuous industry, under the direction of a mind, fired in the purpose of promoting truth. And when we remember that all the luxury, elegance and comfort, which we possess, is referable to mechanical and agricultural labor, we should put honor upon those employments which are most fruitful in blessings. The civilized world are now looking on with profound interest, at the most remarkable exhibition of the trophies of mechanical skill and agricultural industry, which has ever been made in the history of man. For once, we have forgotten the trappings of military heroes, whose honors dyed in blood, were purchased by groans, and tears, and the anguish of broken hearts; we have overlooked the wonders of abstract science, the fame of authors,

and the reputation of statesmen; the lawn, the ermine, and the gown, titles of nobility, and badges of distinction, all pale before the wonders of mechanical creation, and the fruits of the earth perfected by the farmer's skill. It is a proud day for them; the world underwrites their patent of nobility, and owns its allegiance to them as the dispensers of unmixed good. Literature, science, philosophy, wealth and power, unite in an intense curiosity to examine, and to learn at the "World's Fair," in London, what progress labor, honorable and ingenious labor, has made in promoting the high interests of our race. It is right that it should be so. The achievements of the architect and the sculptor are their temples and statues; the artist, catching nature's fleeting beauties, transfers the landscape to the canvass, or fixes the features of the great and good, so as to make them present to all after times. The building of houses for men to dwell in, and all the innumerable appliances by which the comforts as well as the refinements of social life are attained, the means of communication by which mankind are brought into association, and the interchange of the productions of the physical, as well as the intellectual world, are the boon which mechanical labor bestows upon man. To it the astronomer is indebted for the telescope by which he unfolds the wonders of the heavens; the naturalist and the chemist, for all the means of development which their pursuits demand. By it the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal world are subsidized to

produce the useful and the ornamental. In the wonderful results of mechanical labor, we perceive the clearest demonstrations of the great truth, that with reason, God gave to man dominion over the creatures : all creation has felt the power, and in its accommodation to his purposes has owned that dominion. The marble, the granite, the forest and the mine, are the store-houses from which mechanical labor and ingenuity have drawn their materials. Agricultural industry, walking side by side in all its progress, receiving improved implements, and labor-saving expedients, has caused the earth to smile in plenty, and the heart of man to rejoice in abundance. In this peaceful march, streams have gushed out in the desert, and the solitary place has been glad for them. The world's fair now in progress is no collection of military heroes, enthroned on pyramids of human skulls, assembled to recount scenes of butchery and bloodshed ; no congress of political economists and statesmen to ascertain how much may yet be wrung by taxes from a burdened and down-trodden people, or what is the point of oppression which may be approached without incurring the hazard of rebellious uprising ; no council of ecclesiastical dignitaries to devise means of "lording it" over men's consciences. It is no assembly of wild fanatics and canting hypocrites, proposing to speak for mankind in matters of morals, politics and religion. It is the spontaneous acknowledgement of the civilized world, that all avocations are indeed secondary to those two great

and leading ones, which employ mechanical and agricultural labor. It will do much to explode the popular error, which has heretofore degraded them, and whilst I have with pain observed authors and philosophers, whose genius had inscribed their names in the high heraldry of immortal fame, kneeling to receive titles and knighthood from sovereigns, whose history may be well written in the annunciation of their birth, accession and death, it is cheering to record the name of the illustrious and modest Watt, who, declining that empty distinction, preferred to be regarded the great machinist, the steam-king of his age.

“What is noble ? that which places
Truth in its enfranchised will,
Leaving steps, like angel traces,
That mankind may follow still.
E’en though scorn’s malignant glances
Prove him poorest of his clan,
He is noble who advances
Science, and the cause of man.”

I rejoice that our countrymen have been called a nation of utilitarians. It becomes our peculiar position and the nature of our institutions. The expensive luxuries, the castles and the palaces of senile Europe, would be as much out of place in America, as the gray hairs of old age on the temples of youth. I am content to leave fur clothing and satin slippers to enfeebled bodies and gouty feet. They do not become the hardy possessors of a fertile country, but little more than three hundred years old. I do not underrate the literary pretensions of our historians or our philosophers, living or dead. Bowditch, Pres-

cott and Bancroft, with a host of others, need no praise from me to confirm their titles to the high position which they have won. But whilst our pride is gratified by the distinction of our countrymen, I would never feel pain at purchasing the literature, and hiring the genius of the rest of the world. It is because labor can be more profitably employed, that it is not thus directed; a vast country, to be occupied by man, is before us; and to complete this great enterprise is our destiny. The poet, the philosopher, the artist and the historian, are flowers which ornament the sides of this great highway of commerce, mechanical labor, and agricultural enterprise. They refresh the eye, and cheer the heart. But civilization cries out Onward, and labor only can respond to the call. You may look in vain for any rational scheme for this great work, in the reports of school commissioners upon the perfectibility of human nature or universal equality. It will be found only in honest labor, the source of all that gives permanent value to social institutions.

A striking characteristic of the present age, and a part of their official education, is the tendency to bring all action under the power of associations. The effect of combined and associated effort has long been known, and to a certain extent is irresistible. As long as there is anything to act upon, which is susceptible of direct influence, it must be effective. When under the control of wise and prudent men, and directed to legitimate objects, the effects are valuable, and the

effort worthy of all praise. But so liable is such action to abuse, and so uniformly is it abused, that it becomes a grave question, whether more evil than good has not resulted from the expedient. It merges individual responsibility ; men vote for resolutions, pronounce denunciations, and absolutely calumniate their fellow men, in the proceedings of societies and conventions, who would shrink from the vulgarity, as well as recoil from the rudeness, of a personal application of the terms employed. I do not speak of the personal liability which would be incurred, but merely observe that societies are not responsible, nor conventions amenable to the individuals on whom they have ejected their malignant slanders. They fire from behind the battlements, which have always protected those whose nerves are too weak to encounter the consequences of saying individually what their malice dictates ; whilst insincere professions of regard for truth and virtue, induce them to make the reports and resolutions of societies and conventions, the occasion of relieving their hearts of the bitterness they contain. This tendency to transfer individual duties to the action of societies is exceedingly dangerous. It places idlers in the lead, in the formation of public opinion. It is easier to lecture, than to labor ; to denounce vice, than to practise virtue ; to eulogise justice, than to answer its demands. Noisy, restless, and often worthless men, whose chief recommendation is pertness, and whose most striking qualification is impudence, are sent forth to illustrate the beauties of tempe-

rance, or to enforce the great claims of humanity, endorsed by associations who become responsible for all they say and teach. Individual virtue, and individual duties are overlooked and forgotten ; and the country is agitated, concerning the necessity of some great enterprise of doubtful practicability, and not desirable if practicable, whilst claims present and urgent are overlooked. The surface of society is agitated and its repose disturbed ; and moral reform is placed in the hands of those, who seem to forget the extent of human depravity, or the value of true reformation, if we may judge from the motives on which they rely for its production. The usual result is, that either insincerity is superadded to the views which are sought to be eradicated, or a temporary reformation gives place to a permanent and manifest deterioration in the character of those who have been the subjects of this influence. There is but one mode of effectually liberating the mind from error, or the heart from vice : "The power of truth." To live virtue is to rebuke vice. He who illustrates, both in action and opinion, the purity of a christian, and the refinement of a scholar, will satisfy in the best manner the claims of the world upon him. We are bound to aid in the formation of sound public opinion, and in extending its influence. It is not less our duty to oppose that opinion, when perverted by error, or unsound in principle. The tricksters, who seek to make merchandise of men's opinions and influence, have certain cabalistic terms which do them great service in their games.

When hoary error perpetuates an abuse by which they are benefited; they denominate it conservatism, and denounce those who would remove it as radicals. Does any new fanaticism or current of popular feeling set against institutions necessary for the peace and quiet of society, if their interest can be promoted by sailing on that current, or directing that fanaticism, they throw themselves on it and shout—progress, progress! The rights of property, the punishment of crimes, and the institution of the Sabbath, have recently been compelled to defend themselves against the war-cry of “*progress*.” The authority of laws sought to be subjected to the “higher law” of human conscience wages a doubtful war with progress. There is a progress backwards, as well as forwards, downwards as well as upwards. The concentrated action of associations and conventions has incalculably increased the power of agitation; and there is no evil under which the country suffers that is productive of greater practical mischief. Associated mischief-makers are doing the work of the demagogue, on a scale more extended and operating on an amount of popular impulses greatly exceeding that which any individual can compass. *Their Shibboleth is progress and the nineteenth century*; watchwords which assemble all who, either too indolent to maintain themselves by honest labor, or under the instincts of a low ambition for temporary distinctions, disturb the peace and endanger the existence of communities. We hear much of the danger of demagogues. These

are they from whom the greatest mischief is to be feared. I warn you not to countenance such demagogues. If they are ever comparatively harmless, it is in the presence of the courageous friends of right, like serpents deprived of their fangs, overbearing to the unresisting or the timid, but cowering before the eye of honesty and truth. The aid derived from the press, the ready diffusion of corrupt influence and the almost instantaneous effect of dangerous sentiments upon the minds of a community, who with scarce an exception read, disclose an element in our progress well calculated to create anxiety in the minds of all who desire public tranquility or the preservation of liberty. Mere education, and nothing else, will but increase the evil, by increasing the mass of excitable materials. Human depravity has always perverted blessings and turned the most benign influences into the greatest calamities,—great, just in proportion to their capabilities of doing good, when moving in a legitimate direction. You will live to see this problem worked out. In the operation you will have your parts. It will be your duty to acquire influence over your fellow men, by all proper means, in order to be useful to them. But never seek that influence by flattering vice, or justifying wrong. That popularity is only valuable which arises from a just appreciation by our fellow men of our love for justice, our sincerity, and a determination to do right. Expedients wear out and pretences fail, but truth and justice are eternal.

I have said nothing of the claims which the country may have upon her citizen scholars and educated men, as the resource upon which she may draw for statesmen to direct her counsels and protect her institutions. There is fortunately no great need for such a reference. The young and aspiring are sufficiently prompt to acknowledge this claim, however others may be forgotten. There is no scarcity of individuals, out of whom the people may select their rulers, and who are entirely willing to be the subjects of choice. Indeed it is a source of regret, that so many young and inexperienced, but otherwise accomplished gentlemen, seek public life, before time and observation have matured their opinions. And there is perhaps no better evidence of the power of our institutions to withstand the elements of destruction, than the manner in which they have resisted the effects of juvenile legislation. The scholar just from college is less qualified for legislation than the practical self-educated man, with more limited literary attainments. He has won his way to preferment by surmounting obstacles, by associations with men and in collisions with necessity; he has learned firmness by trial, prudence by defeats, and perseverance by want; he has analyzed the elements of society by experience; and the fact of his surviving the struggle with superior mental training on the part of his competitors, bespeaks the presence of high intellectual endowments. Such men are eminently practical, close observers, and remarkable for the accumulation of

useful knowledge. Much of life has passed in the training of such a man, and time has been his faithful and competent teacher. The young scholar, on the other hand, has studied books and theories, and is deficient in experience. He can use more tools, but is unable to wield any of them with the skill, with which the other employs those which use has rendered familiar.

The truth is that statesmen and speech-makers are indigenous, the spontaneous production of our country. We are astonished at the labors of a convention, representing way-farers and emigrants, adventurers and foreigners, who have called a government into existence, in the midst of a prairie, on the banks of a river, or at the foot of a mountain range. Surrounded by deer and wolves, panthers and herds of buffaloes, and reconnoitred by bands of hostile savages, they assemble with their arms in their hands, and form a constitution, the fundamental laws of a great people, containing more practical wisdom, better securities to the rights of persons and property, than all the learned statesmen of the rest of the world, aided with the lore of ancient, and the experience of modern philosophers, politicians and philanthropists, have been able to attain. They make a government and set it to work, whilst the diplomatists of a few European principalities are framing a protocol, preparatory to a negotiation, which may end in a league of confederation; and which, when agreed upon, has still to be revised and approved by all surrounding governments. They

have no old ulcers to conceal, or to cure ; no old abuses to preserve ; no paper walls, which entrench privilege and call for more efficient ramparts to protect them against those who suffer therefrom. Tyranny and oppression derive no respectability from being hoary with age. The disposition prevails to overthrow them the sooner, because such long and insufferable trespassers. Indeed such is the general familiarity with the great principles of the common law, throughout our whole population, that there is scarcely any man of practical sense, who cannot sit down at his table and *currente calamo* produce a constitution, under which any people, indoctrinated as ours are with fixed opinions of civil liberty, may live, flourish, and grow great. Learning and education, scholars and educated men, perform a most valuable office in giving the capability a proper direction. When the educated man is also a practical and experienced one, his advantages over all competitors, who have not his attainments, are incalculable. But practical utilitarian statesmen are the hope of the country, and the people have sufficient sagacity to discover those qualifications and call them into their service. The hour of peril will disclose those who are competent to the crisis, just as a company of strangers will select their commander, in a moment when all must be lost without concert. There is an unfailing instinct upon this subject, and which pervades masses whenever circumstances call it into action. To be such a statesman as the country demands of the citizen-scholar, he must to learning

add practical wisdom, high purposes of justice, unwavering adherence to honest principles, the courage to rebuke popular error, throw himself in front of popular prejudice, and encounter all its assaults, rather than sacrifice truth or surrender the right; a firmness which far exceeds the courage that sustains the soldier in the noise, the clamor and the fury of battle; he is buoyed up by excitement, and fall or triumph, he wins his meed of glory. The statesman who is compelled to oppose the policy of the dominant party, to rebuke his countrymen for wrong and injustice, must look coolly and calmly upon the withdrawal of confidence, the loss of fame, and the ability to do good, until time shall disclose the depth of his sagacity, and the purity of his motives. It required much more courage to encounter the ostracism of his countrymen by Aristides, than the perils of Thermopylæ by Leonidas. The statesman who looks much beyond the rewards of an approving conscience, and the legacy of a good name to his family, has not considered maturely the mutations in public opinion. He who seeks public life merely for its emoluments or rewards, manifests the avidity of the gambler, without the trickery and skill necessary for success. They seek for wealth where, we are thankful, our economical ancestors determined it should not be found, and for rewards to labor in a field far inferior to any that agricultural, mechanical, or professional enterprise presents. It is honorable to serve the country well, whether in public or in private life. No man should

refuse the call of his fellow-citizens to serve them, unless considerations of the highest kind should prevent. Neither should he desire to continue in their service any longer, than he is satisfied that he can do so with a conscience sustaining him in the convictions that truth, justice, and the public welfare are his only motives. The man at peace with himself, should tremble at no external commotion.

The habits of collegiate life give direction to the mind, and control the current of thought. The scholar just from his books feels that the contemplation of abstract propositions, and purely scientific principles, have made him something of a stranger to the real business of life. It is on this account, that some avoid the collisions which social institutions generate, retire from active association with the masses, and cultivate literature as a luxurious recreation rather than a duty. That intellectual pleasures are both refined and fascinating cannot be denied, but it is equally true that they are greatly enlarged by sharing them with others, to say nothing of the obvious duty of contributing to the improvement of our fellow men. The attainments which are reached in the course of collegiate education, are only the beginning of the great work of mental discipline. If the scholar has learned the powers of his own mind, and how to concentrate them on any subject, he has made a large and valuable acquisition. To array and combine our thoughts with accuracy and ease, is the great end of mental training. It is not the reading of many books. It is

not seclusion and study alone, which constitutes the ripe scholar, the practical man. A writer of much celebrity for wisdom has long ago remarked, that "of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness to the flesh." The same is true of reading the books when made, and much, very much, of the study which consumes health and time is a mere unprofitable weariness. The habit of much and promiscuous reading is a bad one. Thoughts and ideas pass across the mind, and leave it unimpressed and unimproved; like the desert over which the caravan passes, laden with jewels and wealth, it leaves it a desert still. But there is this difference, the desert road leads to the desired mart, the caravan may profitably pass and return. Not so with one who reads from habit, and without digesting what is read. Rich thoughts and brilliant ideas flit across his mind but leave no trace of their passage, neither increasing his own intellectual wealth, nor enabling him to contribute to that of others. This is the error of some, while others conceive that the collection of libraries is a very indispensable portion of the duties of an educated man. A good library is a most valuable acquisition, a good thing. But there is much of literary foppery in connection with this subject. It is not often that the collector of books reads the books which he collects; he is useful in his way however, as the freight-train laden with merchandise is drawn by the engine to the market where the demand for it is to be supplied. Others may read some of the books and be profited. It is not the man of

many books and wearisome study of whom you should be afraid, in intellectual competition ; but I will tell you who is always formidable, the man who reads a few good books and reads them well, who relies much upon the conclusions of his own mind, and thinks for himself. Read books, but study men. Read books, but study nature. Read books, but study your own heart and mind ; and you will acquire all that is useful and valuable, you will find a profitable employment for all that you may learn.

I have thus, gentlemen, made some remarks on your duties as citizen-scholars, and educated men ; the subject is copious, and all that I proposed was an allusion to some of the prominent claims of the world upon all who have enjoyed the facilities of mental cultivation. Permit me to add that mental without moral culture is a great calamity, both to the individual and to society. Learning, or knowledge, in the possession of a wicked and unscrupulous man, is a sword in the hands of a maniac, the means of destruction in the possession of one reckless of the mischief he may perpetrate. Should you return to this place, after an absence as long continued as my own, you will be deeply impressed with this truth ; you will have seen the extended ruin which corrupt and wicked talent and learning has effected ; you will perhaps be constrained to drop a tear over the melancholy history of some, whose early promise gave tokens of much good. Thirty-two years ago, I passed from the control of the faculty of this venerable institution, into

life. Many and varied have been the scenes through which my path has led me; and many of the feelings of that day, though long since fled, return and cluster about my heart. I remember faces beaming with hope, and bright with genius, minds rich in learning, and hearts kind and generous; but to remember is to mourn. The lessons of self-denial and self-control were never learned, and early promises were not fulfilled. If you would ascend in your progress, draw your motives from the skies. Our race is peculiar in this, it is endowed with reason, a faculty by which the unknown is discovered and revealed by combinations of things which are known. It would not be reverential to attribute reason to our Maker, because it would suppose that there are things unknown to him. But he has created orders of intelligent beings, who are doubtless greatly the superiors of man in the perception of truth, but who, if not the subjects of progress, must ultimately be greatly his inferiors. The powers of reason increase and expand, and with it our capacity of enjoyment, as well as our intellectual dignity. If reason receive its illumination from heaven, the light will draw us there, and education on earth will be only a pupilage for the skies. The christian scholar is prepared for the humble as well as the higher employments of life, and is always ready for the calls of duty. Each moment has its claims upon his best and noblest powers, and to recognise and satisfy them is his highest enjoyment. He devotes his life to the greatest of all enterprises, the

promotion of the good of his race, and lays down that life without a murmur, when he has notice that his work is done. Years have passed away since, a few hours before my departure from this place, I witnessed a striking illustration of this remark in the death of such a christian scholar. I stood by the bedside, and saw the last moments, of the venerable Samuel Stanhope Smith, who yielded to the stroke of death, full of years and honors. Bound to him by ties of hereditary affection, I called to take my leave, and saw him quietly passing away, the tide of life slowly but gently ebbing ; conscious of his approaching end, but calm and composed ; preserving the affability of the gentleman, the refinement of the scholar, and the dignity of the christian, in circumstances which threw a lustre over each. With kind courtesy, he said : " Farewell, my young friend ; may many useful happy years be yours ! remember that your time and your talents belong to God and your country. You have come in time to see the end of many days, and the close of all my sorrows. Say to my friends, your parents, I shall reach heaven before them." I looked upon his fine features, becoming rigid in death, but brightened by genius, like the radiance of the wintry sunbeam, flashing against an icicle, which it may irradiate for a moment but cannot melt. I saw the last moments of one, who was identified with the earliest efforts to secure classical learning to the land of my birth ; whose name was associated with all that was elevated and pure ; under

whose influence and by whose agency, this college rose like a phenix from its own ashes.

Nor can I forget the distinguished gentlemen, who presided over this institution, whilst I was a student. In singleness of heart, purity of motive, and firmness of purpose, combined with all that was necessary to qualify him for the station which he filled, Dr. Ashbel Green had no superior. To know him intimately, was to love and to venerate him; and it was refreshing to meet with him, and perceive the overflowing of his kind heart towards his former pupils, years after he had retired from the government of the college.

In looking around me, I perceive but a single individual who was one of the faculty in 1819, and still continues that relation to my venerable Alma Mater. In him, I recognise a valued friend, who will excuse this reference to former days, because it calls up a friendship of early date, and which has grown with an esteem that his usefulness has fixed in the minds of all who can appreciate worth.

My connection with this institution was one of uninterrupted pleasure, and I trust that I may be excused for this reference to its details. I should be insensible to the feelings common to our nature, if I should fail to remember the friends and the benefactors of my youth; it would be strange, indeed, if I refused to taste the cup of joy, which memory now presses to my lips. Youth with those of my years is a matter of historical recollection, and I confess the

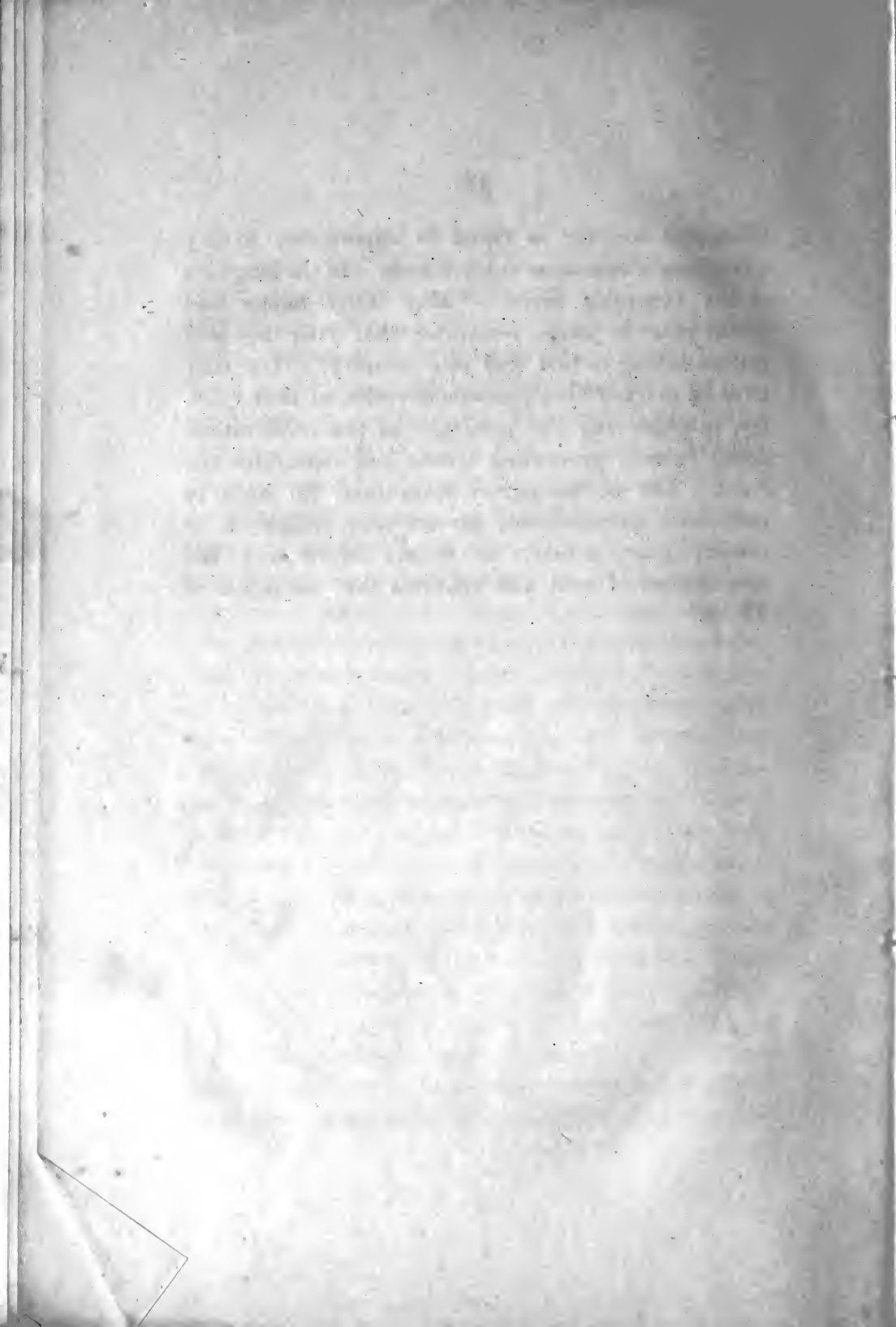
pleasure which the diorama of its scenes communicates. I see around me some who were young when I was young, and parties to the incidents which interested us all. There is a feeling awakened by such reunions which tell of mirthfulness unrestrained by care, the overflowings of guileless hearts, of times and scenes which haunt us through life, and in the passage of fleeting years, linger on the memory like "the notes of some wild melody." We condense the experience of years which have passed since we mingled in the academic throng. We remember the feelings and the impulses which gave activity to our energies then, and since, and now ; and the landscape of life presents all the varied lights of morning, noon and evening. Each congenial to the time of life, each becoming in its season, and each instructive in its progress. All of us rejoiced in youth. We remember that then "joy waved over us his sun-woven wing," and the grave pursuits of mature years have deprived us of none of the zest with which we catch the fragrance of the zephyr that flies over the flowers of youth, increasing their beauty, whilst it but gently agitates their surface. We have seen its genial influences cause a smile to steal over the brow of care, and gild even the face of age with an auroral light.

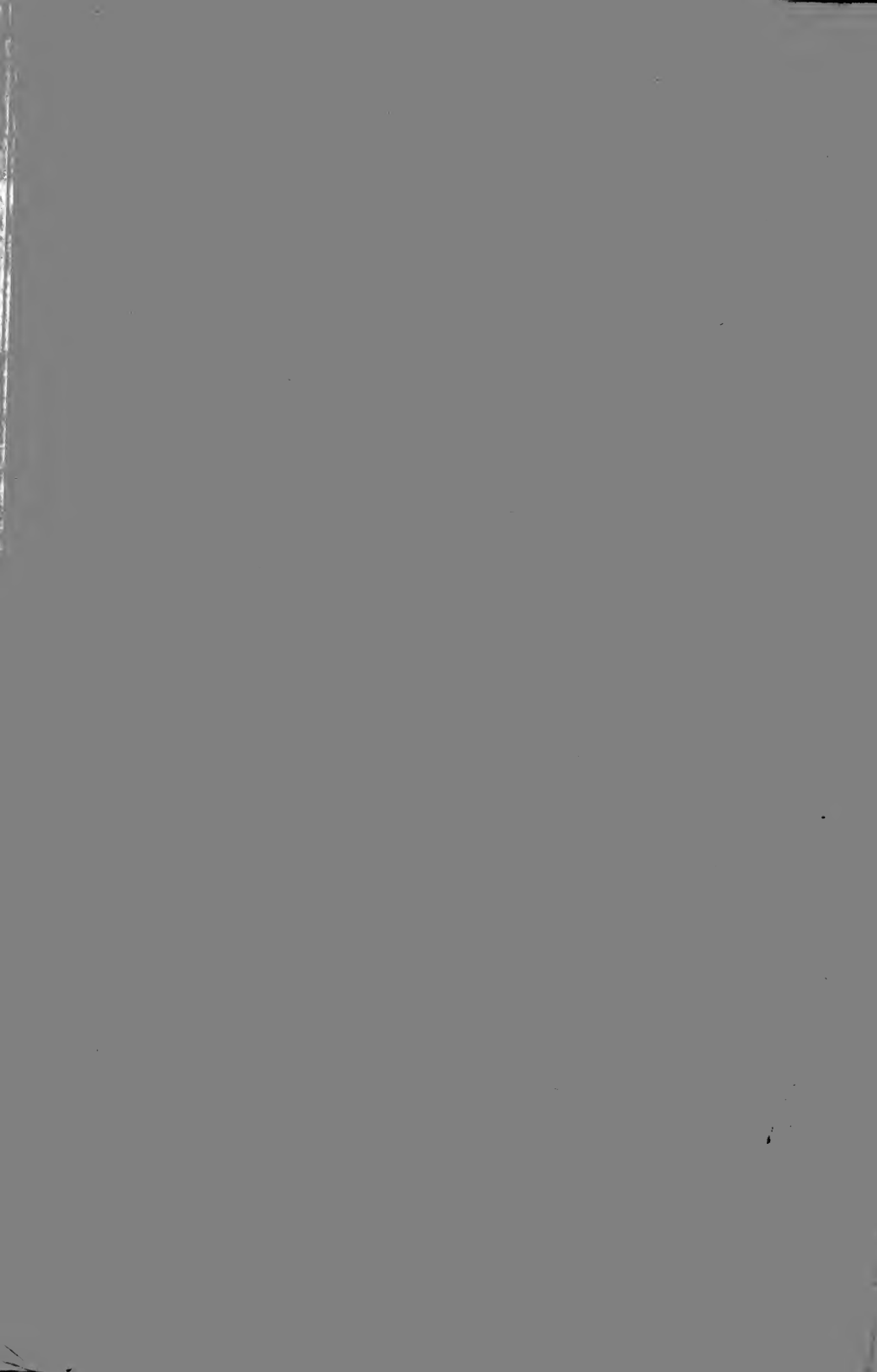
It is not my purpose to undervalue the joys or the pursuits of the young or to cloud their prospects by raven croakings of future disappointments. Far from it :

“For youth no less becomes
The light and careless livery that it wears,
Than settled age his sables and his weeds,
Importing health and graveness.”

There are none of us but have been often refreshed by turning back in the path of life to catch the sunlight of our early days. Those rays now give me light, and have presented before me some of the visions I have so imperfectly revealed, some of those hopes which I then, and now, and shall ever cherish; and the associations of this hour will leave a fragrance which “shall breathe of it many a year.” A return to these scenes, the presence of the distinguished societies to which you belong, the competitions high and honorable, which they have always produced, and the useful results which have been realized by our great confederacy, through the instrumentalities here, cannot fail to call up peculiar emotions in the bosom of one who, for the first time for thirty-two years, witnesses the ceremonial of your commencement. I congratulate the country upon the continuation of the renown of this seat of learning. I congratulate you upon the prosperity of your societies, which cradled in the revolution have given to the country a bright succession of learned and patriotic citizens, whose names and characters shall adorn its history. May they long continue to prosper, and although my heart may warm peculiarly to the touch of my own clan colors, I know you will excuse the weakness if it be one, when I assure you that I have ever regarded the training acquired in the American Whig and

Philosophic societies as equal in importance, to any advantage of education enjoyed here. In the language of the venerable Smith—"May many happy and useful years be yours, remember that your time and talents belong to God and your country." Let your lives be marked by a patriotic devotion to that country, in preserving the principles of the constitution, doing justice, preventing wrong and defending the right. Let no temporary advantage, no hope of individual advancement, pervert your judgment, or control your action; for "time overthrows the speculations of men, and confirms the judgments of Truth."





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 028 329 037 2